Leading for Results

By TK-S

I recently attended the Riara University first graduation. It was a day of joy and pomp as graduands and their families beamed with joy at their achievement. Other beams of joy were flowing from many as they looked and listened to Riara Group of Schools founders – Mr. Daniel and Prof. Addah Gachukia. Their dream, 50 years ago, in 1994 when they founded the Riara Kindergarten was to establish a pipeline of schools that would ensure the education and development of the whole child, learner and person. Indeed, Riara group of schools has succeeded in being known as a reputable household Kenyan school of high repute and quality education. It was such a joy to share in seeing the fulfillment of their dream. Many of their friends and family from those initial years were there and shared their pride. As I listened and interacted with guests I observed that the Gachukia’s were very intentional on the kind of leadership decisions they made as they wanted certain results. Results means ‘occur or follow as the consequence of something’, follow from, derive from, arise from or be brought about by. This means that results come from a certain kind of leadership. From my interactions at the very first graduation of Riara University, I gleaned the following 3 principles we can emulate:

1. ***Focus:*** In the world of photography focus is used to draw the viewer’s eyes first to the important bold elements. A leader must be clear of what they want to focus on and in turn provide a view to followers of what the important elements are. This then provides the whole team with a clarity and goal to aim for. In any given leadership situation, there will be many things that need fixing, resolving or sorting. However, leading for results means being able to identify what is critical and should be focused on. Many times the right focus has a domino effect on what else needs fixing. Some leaders use the pareto principle to determine what to focus on. Simply put, they identify 20% activities that if well done will produce 80% of results. The Gachukia’s singular focus was to see the Riara group of schools providing a pipeline of education at every level. The Apostle Paul said – I press on toward the goal to win the prize. What is your goal and prize? What results are you aiming for?
2. ***Values***: Jim Collins in his book ……. posits that one of the qualities of great organizations are shared values. Long lasting organisations tend to have core values that remain with them. Although, strategies and plans can change their core purpose and values remain. This is the same with the Riara group of schools. Values can be espoused or enacted. Espoused values are those that an organization states it believes in, while enacted are those the organisation ensures are part of what the organization does and employees perceive to be important because they form part of the expected and displayed behavior. Excellence, leading by example, innovation and team work are the Riara University values that they espouse. As you walk through the Riara group of schools you can see and feel excellence from the time one enters the compound. Values espoused and enacted need to be a reflection of what the end it. Values determine the ambience within which the results will be achieved.
3. ***Resources***: Key leadership decisions is on resources. Resources are productive factors that can be used to create wealth and achieved goals. We have to make decisions on which resources we need to get the results we want and where the resources will come from. Key resources include time, financial and human resources. The Riara group of schools because are well resourced and that has ensured that the Riara student is to the superior university stands because of the choice choices the Gachukia’s made. I was particularly struck by the caliber of academic staff at the university and the quality of projects that
4. ***Excellent***. Excellence is not the attainment of perfection but rather the pursuit of a higher superior standard. It is a continuous process that seeks an ever-improving distinction and one that the Gachukia’s and the Riara university dons and students kept talking about. I heard stories that day that of how Mr. Gachukia ensured that as the buildings in each of the locations were coming up he took time to determine the ambience of the schools and the university and it was always better than the last. Other stories were shared of how they took time and thorough process in recruitment and selection to ensure only highly qualified staff with their shared values were selected. Their graduates also spoke of the rigor of their studies. One law graduate spoke of the global competitions they were encouraged to participate in and how they were required to prepare for each and in many they won or had an enviable result. Excellence has given Riara group of schools a mark of distinction.

Do you desire to lead for results, then start and lead with the end in mind, keep the results in focus even as you make leadership decisions and choices. In the end, it is not what you intended that will be seen but rather what you actually achieved.